

WELAKA NATIONAL FISH HATCHERY NEWS

October 2016



Welaka Wildlife Fact:

Sherman's Fox Squirrel: *Sciurus niger shermani*

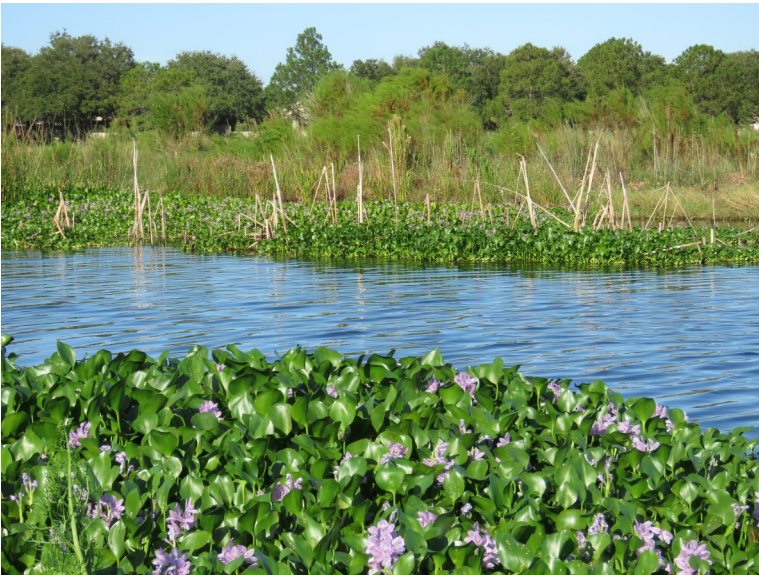
The Sherman's Fox Squirrel is a large tree squirrel with unique fur coloring ranging from all black to grey with black heads. They can be found in central Georgia south thru Peninsular Florida. They are currently a species of special concern in the state of Florida.

Field Guide to the Rare Animals of Florida, Florida Natural Areas Inventory, 2001

Welaka NFH Conducts Fish Survey at MacDill Air Force Base

In the August issue of the Welaka Newsletter (<https://www.fws.gov/welaka/pdf/welaka-Newsletter-08-2016.pdf>), you read about the work Welaka NFH was conducting under the Sikes Act to control nuisance aquatic vegetation in the waters in and around MacDill Air Force Base near Tampa, FL. In October, hatchery staff met with John Galvez from the Peninsular Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office to conduct a fish survey on Lewis Lake. The goal of this survey was to determine what impact the nuisance aquatic vegetation has had on the fish population in Lewis Lake. Results of the survey indicate the fish populations have been suppressed due to the vegeta-

tion. Welaka NFH is now planning on stocking fish into Lewis Lake to help the fish population recover to sustainable levels now that the vegetation has been reduced. Vegetation control will continue because now that cattails are under control, it seems that water hyacinth is threatening to spread over the lake which would again hamper efforts to reestablish the fish populations in Lewis Lake. Welaka NFH is committed to enhancing the natural resources for the benefit of the men and women and their families who serve at MacDill Air Force Base.



A few small Largemouth Bass and some Sunfish were collected during the fish survey.

Dying cattails in the background and new water hyacinth flowering in the foreground.



Welaka NFH Provides Fall Flowers for Monarch Butterflies

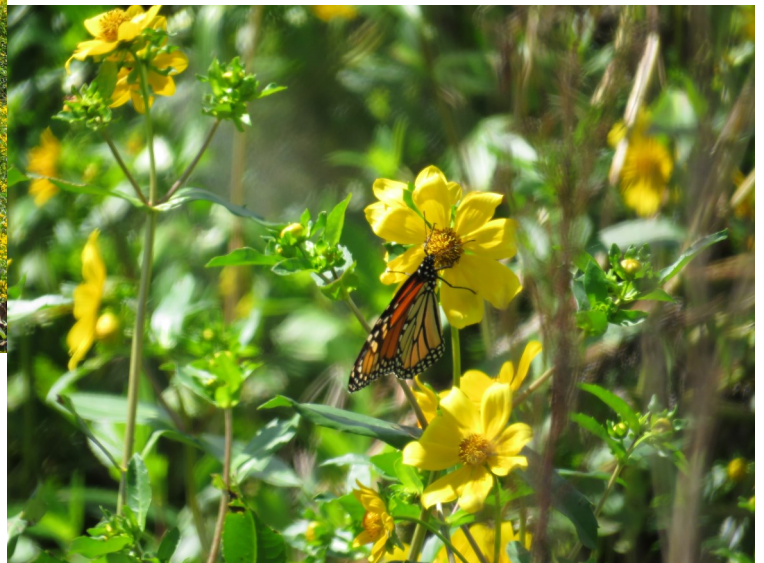
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been striving to increase habitat for the enhancement of Monarch Butterfly populations on Service owned lands such as refuges and fish hatcheries. Most of this effort has been to develop gardens and flower beds full of milkweed for Monarchs to use to lay their eggs to increase their populations. At Welaka NFH, we have taken a different approach. On the Beecher Springs unit of the hatchery there are two runs that receive water from Beecher Springs. In the past, these runs would fill with cattails, and over the past couple of years we have been taking steps to reduce the amount of cattails in the runs. As we have reduced the cattails, we have allowed Bur Marigolds to natu-

rally become established in the run. The flowers of the Bur Marigolds bloom in the fall and provide a food source for Monarchs as they migrate to their winter homes in South Florida and Mexico. Currently, Welaka NFH has 1.7 acres of Bur Marigolds growing on the hatchery with an additional 1.5 acres of habitat that can be colonized in the future. While we still plan on planting some milkweed for Spring Butterflies, it is our Fall gardens that we are most proud of – during a quick drive along the flowers it is common to see 15 - 30 Monarch Butterflies, as well as many other pollinators, flying around the flowers fueling up for their flight south.



Bur Marigolds cover 1.7 acres of spring run at Welaka NFH

Monarch Butterflies have become a common sight at Welaka NFH once the Bur Marigolds bloom.



National Geographic Photographer Visits Welaka National Fish Hatchery

Joel Sartore, a photographer for National Geographic Magazine, has a passion for the unique diversity of life found on planet Earth and is concerned about the rate in which species are disappearing from this planet. Mr. Sartore's passion has led him to found Photo Ark, an ambitious project in which he is attempting to photograph as many species as he can get in front of his camera. According to the Photo Ark website, Mr. Sartore has photographed more than 6,000 species, and that number is growing almost daily. In October, Mr. Sartore added to his number of fish and crawfish photos with a visit to Welaka

National Fish Hatchery. The staff at Welaka NFH assisted Mr. Sartore by providing him with fish and crawfish we either produce or were able to collect on the hatchery grounds. On the top of his wish list were the Atlantic Sturgeon that the hatchery cultures and American Eel. While Welaka NFH doesn't culture American Eels, they are common in the run from Beecher Springs, which is the water source for the Beecher Springs Unit of the hatchery. It was a pleasure having Mr. Sartore here at the hatchery and for the staff to assist him in his endeavor to fill his ARK.



Joel Sartore sets up in the back of the Welaka NFH aquarium to increase his collection of critters for his Photo Ark.